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## REVIEWS

**Britton's Manual of the Flora of the Northern States and Canada**

The most widely useful and influential books are those which summarize in convenient form for students the results of a period of notable scientific activity. Such a book we have in Dr. Britton's Manual.\*

When Britton and Brown's Illustrated Flora appeared, in 1896-1898, botanists had a new and indispensable treatise on our northeastern flora, but it was bulky and expensive. The three royal octavo volumes of that work, which contained nearly 1900 pages, weighed  $12\frac{1}{2}$  pounds, and cost nine dollars, are now digested and compressed into a single small volume of less than 1100 pages, which weighs not quite two pounds. The pages of the new work, including the margins, are  $7\frac{3}{4}$  by 5 inches, and the whole book, including the flexible linen covers, is  $1\frac{3}{8}$  inches thick. The paper is thin and the sewing is not too tight. The book stays open. These mechanical features suggest at once how usable the book will be in the field.

Compared with the Illustrated Flora in its subject matter, the Manual has shorter descriptions, omits synonymy and citations, omits figures but includes references to them, and abbreviates geographic names. The English system of measurements is replaced throughout in the Manual by the metric system. Many new species are added, based particularly on the critical work of Bicknell, Fernald, Greene, Nash, Rydberg, Scribner, and Small, besides the work of Dr. Britton himself. The Manual contains, for example, seven species of *Antennaria*, nine species of *Sisyrinchium*, and thirteen violets not figured in the Illustrated Flora.

The principal fault in the makeup of the book is the use of two indexes instead of a single index, which causes annoyance by accidental reference to the wrong one, and wastes time unnecessarily. The lack of a species index to some of the large genera will also cause annoyance, notably in the case of *Carex*,

\* Britton, N. L. Manual of the Flora of the Northern States and Canada. 8vo. Pp. x + 1080. 1901. New York: Henry Holt and Company. Price, \$2.25.

which includes 205 species and covers 40 pages. One typographical abnormality of the Illustrated Flora has disappeared, namely, the use of *AEsculus* for *Aesculus*. The use of the capital E was both ugly and incorrect and has been dispensed with in the Manual.

The Engler and Prantl sequence, and the many new species and new names will give to some a feeling of strangeness. He who was brought up to look for the Ranunculaceae on page 1 of his botany and now at last locates them near the middle of the book, not very far from the vile Chenopodiaceae; who must learn to discriminate ten species of *Antennaria* where the early botanists taught him there was only one; and who used to think that *Acer saccharinum* meant the sugar maple, when now it means the silver maple—he who has a feeling that unnecessary duties are thrust upon him by these new features must remember that they appear because they are right, and that the old features have been discarded because they were wrong.

Every botanist from Labrador to the Cimarron must have a copy of "Britton's Manual." He will find it a comfortable book to hold in his hand and a satisfactory book with which to name any plant from adder's tongue to blessed thistle.—FREDERICK V. COVILLE.

#### A popular Work on Ferns\*

Mr. Clute has given us a carefully prepared and readable book on the ferns of the Northeastern States, for the subtitle, which reads "A Guide to all the native Species" has a local rather than a national significance and for that reason is misleading. The work includes a combination of ancient folk-lore about ferns, poetical allusions to ferns, mingled with an untechnical statement of their characters, habits, and haunts, not badly written, and provided with a series of accurate structural illustrations. To these are added a considerable number of full-page illustrations, some of them colored. From the artistic standpoint these full-page illustrations may be correct but as a means of illustrating the habits and especially the habitats of our ferns they are far from success-

\* CLUTE, W. N. Our Ferns in their Haunts, a Guide to all the native Species. 12mo., pp. xii, 322. Illustrated. New York. Frederick A. Stokes Company.